

REMARKS

It is requested that the Examiner note that a Power of Attorney and Change of Correspondence Address by Assignee was filed on May 14, 2003, a copy of which is attached hereto.

Claim 18 has been amended to clarify that it is each unique catalog item within the first catalog database that is identified with respect to class, attribute and value relationships. New claims 22-25 are supported at least in the specification at page 9, line 6 through page 10, line 4. New claim 22 further limits class relationships to a hierarchy having a leaf class as the lowest class, claim 23 limits the attribute relationships to between a leaf class and an attribute, claim 24 enumerates the types of attributes, and claim 25 limits the value relationships to between an attribute and a value thereof.

Reconsideration and allowance of this Application are respectfully requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 17-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Erickson (U.S. Patent No. 6,014,644) in view of Bohm et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,404,507, hereinafter "Bohm").
The Office Action Position

The Office Action alleges that Erickson discloses (Fig. 1) a procurement system for a buyer to purchase a desired item (col. 1, lines 10-14), the procurement system comprising a first catalog database (18) accessible to the buyer (see Fig. 1) lacking the desired item; and a second catalog database (16) wherein each catalog item is identified with respect to class, attribute, and value relationships (col. 9, lines 35-58). The Office Action admits that Erickson does not disclose an item selection procedure as recited in claim 17.

The Office Action alleges that Bohm discloses a similar procurement system (col. 1, line 64-col. 2, line 2) comprising an item selection procedure in which a search of a second database is conducted when the desired item is not located within the first database (col. 4, lines 12-26) and that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have provided the system of Erickson to have included

an item selection procedure relying on Erickson's pre-established search schema for class/attribute/value searching in order that certain limitations of the first database might be mitigated effectively by the supplementation of additional database searching functionality (as taught by Bohm).

Applicant's Response

Applicants respectfully traverse.

Applicants agree with the Examiner that Erickson fails to teach an item selection procedure as recited in instant claim 17.

Contrary to the allegation of the Office Action, however, Erickson does not teach a first catalog database (18) accessible to the buyer and *lacking* the desired item; and does not teach a second catalog database (16). Erickson teaches a central database (16), a portion of which may be copied by a buyer (10) or supplier (12) into a local database such as local database (18) so that desired information can be accessed locally rather than by establishing contact with a service provider (14) in order to access central database (16) (col. 7, lines 18-28). The point being that local database (16) is a subset of the central database (18) that the buyer has selected to be stored locally for accessing locally. In effect, they are the same database since a subset may be some or all of the whole set. And, nowhere does Erickson teach a first catalog database (18) lacking the desired item.

Further, Erickson does not teach any database organized by class, attribute, and value relationships wherein classes are hierarchically related and a leaf level class has attributes and the attributes have values, as recited by present claims 22-24. Erickson teaches a central database (24) may contain classifications comprising classification ID, classification description, and other information necessary to identify a single particular classification. Nowhere does Erickson disclose class relationships nor does Erickson mention attribute relationships and value relationships. Erickson only teaches that company profiles and products may link to these various classifications to identify the

classes of goods or services offered by a particular company. No database having class/attribute/value relationships as defined by claim 17 or a hierarchy of classes with leaf classes having attributes and leaf attributes having values, as recited by claims 22-25, is taught by Erickson. At best, Erickson teaches a database of linked records -- product linked to supplier linked to a class of goods and services -- which is not the recited class, attribute, and value relationships of instant claim 17 nor the hierarchical classes of claims 22-25.

The Office Action alleges that Bohm discloses a similar procurement system. Applicants respectfully traverse. Bohm discloses information or item databases created for a plurality of customer input fields in which all the text in each of the fields is used for identification of items in the database, i.e., a form of an inverted list or index is created from the contents of each user supplied field (col. 3, lines 61-65). This index disclosed by Bohm is thus a *flat* index and not the index of class/attribute/value relationships recited by instant claim 17 nor the hierarchical or *multi-level* and *non-flat* index of class/attribute/value relationship recited by instant claims 22-25. It should be noted that Bohm teaches a search and indexing system that generates search expressions and indexes based on the text content of user supplied fields and does so by employing expanded acronyms and abbreviations and words that are close to user supplied search terms in case the user misspelled the search term (col. 2, lines 10-18; col. 3, lines 56-60). Bohm teaches that by creating a set of search expressions, the database interrogation system supplements each search term used by a customer with additional terms and phrases that provide an equivalent representation of the term from the original customer request for increasing the likelihood of retrieving the correct record (col. 1, lines 64-col. 2 line 2). The system taught by Bohm is therefore not a system that is similar to the procurement system of instant claim 17 in which unique catalog items are identified with respect to class, attribute and value relationships nor is the system taught by Bohm similar to the system taught by claims 22-25 in which unique catalog items are identified with respect

to a hierarchy of class, attribute and value relationships.. There are no relationships among the database fields or their contents taught by Bohm and further Bohm does not teach using any relationships among fields or their contents for identifying items stored in any database. Bohm teaches a text-based indexing and retrieval system having no relationships among, for example, Title fields or their contents, and the present invention is claiming a relationship-based system wherein class/attribute/value relationships are used to identify each unique catalog item stored within a second database (claim 17) and a first database (claim 18). Therefore, it would not have been obvious to one skilled in the art to use Bohm's approach to multiple text-based database querying by a text-based search schema in Erickson's linked- record-based databases. Even assuming, *arguendo*, that Erickson disclosed a database wherein unique items are identified by class/attribute/value relationships, it would still not be obvious to one skilled in the art to use Bohm's text-based search schema to search Erickson's relationship-based database. Bohm's approach is single-field-content-oriented and Erickson's is inter-field-relationship-oriented and one skilled in the art would readily recognize that these two approaches are not commensurate, i.e., they are not interchangeable or even interoperable and in trying to apply one to the other would result in information impedance problems. Therefore, there would have been no motivation for one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teaching of Erickson with the teaching of Bohm to achieve the invention of instant claims 17-25.

Further, Bohm does not cure the deficiency of Erickson with regard to a lack or a teaching of a second catalog for an item not located in a first catalog or of the way in which unique catalog items are stored within a second catalog using class, attribute, and value relationships.

Therefore, in view of the above discussion, neither Erickson nor Bohm, alone or in combination, can be relevant prior art for the present invention which recites a procurement system for a buyer to purchase a desired item by searching in a second catalog database when the desired item is not located

in a first catalog database of known items, the second catalog database storing each unique item identified with respect to class, attribute, and value relationships (instant independent claim 17). Therefore, the Office Action has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness and the rejection should be withdrawn, claim 17 is allowable and claims 18-21, dependent therefrom are allowable for at least this reason.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, all stated rejections of the Office Action have been overcome and this Application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

If any issues remain which may be best resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to kindly telephone the undersigned at the local, Washington D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Noreen O. Welch
Registration No. 45,208

Date: May 28, 2003

NOW/att

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. TPP31401A

STEVENS, DAVIS, MILLER & MOSHER, L.L.P.
1615 L Street, NW, Suite 850
P.O. Box 34387
Washington, D.C. 20043-4387

Telephone: (202) 785-0100
Facsimile: (202) 408-5200